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AUTHOR Bernoff, Louis
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ABSTRACT

This is a report on high school dropouts in the Los Angeles Unified School District during 1979-80. The study covered 110 secondary schools and sought to determine: 1) the frequency and rate of school leaving among tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders; 2) the characteristics of the leaver; and 3) reasons for leaving school. The data were collected from students' "Record of Transfer" forms. Results showed that: 1) the total number of regular high school leavers in 1979-80 equaled approximately 5 percent of the 1979 senior high school population; 2) students tended to leave school more frequently during the second semester of the school year; 3) more males than females left school; 4) the proportions of black or Hispanic school leavers tended to be greater than their respective proportions in the total high school student population; 5) the most frequent reason given for leaving was "overage" among eleventh and twelfth graders; 6) a large number of tenth graders were dropped from attendance rolls and classified as "whereabouts unknown" students; and 7) institutionalization/incarceration was given as a reason for leaving more frequently among tenth graders than among eleventh or twelfth graders. It was recommended that school leavers be studied on a regular basis; that potential leavers be identified; and that dropout prevention activities be instituted in areas with high dropout rates. (Author/MJL)

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EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATING, 1979 - 80

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LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

UD 022 315

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATING, 1979-80

Prepared by the
Research and Evaluation Branch
of the
Los Angeles Unified School District
November 1981

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

HARRY HANDLER
Superintendent

This report was prepared by
Louis Bernoff, Coordinator

APPROVED:

FLORALINE I. STEVENS
Director
Research and Evaluation Branch

JOSEPH P. LINSCOMB
Associate Superintendent, Instruction

PREFACE

This report on early school leavers is the fifth in a series of related reports in the Los Angeles Unified School District dating back to 1963. It is planned to continue such reports on a regular basis.

The research and findings presented herein should assist administrators, teachers, and parents in recognizing potential school leavers, and in seeking better ways of counseling, guiding, and retaining them in school.

The substance of this report was obtained from all senior high schools in the District, and appreciation is extended to their principals and staff for providing such data.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE iii

LIST OF TABLES vi

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1

A. Previous Research 1

B. Previous LAUSD Studies 2

II. DESCRIPTION 3

A. Purpose 3

B. Procedures 3

Schools in the Study 3
Data Gathering 3
Subjects of the Study 4
Data Processing 4
Data Analysis 4

III. RESULTS 5

A. Incidence of L8 School Leavers 5

Leavers by Type of School 6
Leavers by Administrative Area 6
Leavers by School Month 7

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

PAGE

B. Characteristics of L8 School Leavers 8

Sex of Leavers 8
Grade Level of Leavers 8
Mean Age of Leavers 9
Racial/Ethnic Identity of Leavers 9

C. Reasons L8 School Leavers Left School 12

Reasons by Sex 13
Reasons by Grade Level 13
Reasons by Mean Age 15
"Other" Reasons 16

IV. DISCUSSION, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 17

A. Discussion 17

B. Findings 18

C. Recommendations 18

REFERENCE NOTES 20

REFERENCE LIST 20

APPENDIX 21

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1.	Senior High School L8 Leavers and First School Month Enrollment, Distributed by Type of School	5
2.	Senior High School L8 Leavers, Reported by Administrative Area	6
3.	Senior High School L8 Leavers, Distributed by School Month and Type of School	7
4.	Sex of Senior High School L8 Leavers, Distributed by Grade	8
5.	Grade of Senior High School L8 Leavers, by Type of School	9
6.	Mean Age of Senior High School L8 Leavers, by Type of School and Sex	10
7.	Comparison of L8 Leavers and First School Month Enrollment in Senior High Schools, by Ethnicity and Type of School	11
8.	Comparison of L8 Leavers and First Month Enrollment in Senior High Schools by Ethnicity and Administrative Area	12
9.	Reasons L8 Senior High School Students Left School, by Sex of Student	14
10.	Reasons L8 Senior High School Students Left School, Ranked and Reported by Grade	15
11.	Reasons L8 Senior High School Students Left School, Showing Mean Age and Number of Students Identified with Each Reason	16
12.	Written Statements Accompanying Coded Reason 20 ("other") for 790 Senior High School L8 Leavers	17

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATING, 1979-80

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Although there have been countless studies addressing the many aspects and facets of education, the problem of school leavers remains one of the most critical national concerns. The annual number of school leavers across the nation is overwhelming. In discussing the impact on society of undereducated youth, W. M. Jones (1972) projected that the decade of the 70s would see 800,000 students leave school before completing work for a high school diploma. He indicated that "for these children, much of the cherished American dreams of equity, equality of educational opportunity, equality of employment opportunity, and the pursuit of happiness and material success, are a cruel hoax." Who are these children who leave school? Why do they leave? A background to these questions is presented in this major section, first by a review of research as found in the literature, followed by a review of past studies on the subject conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

A. Previous Research

There is a large body of research that has attempted to answer the above questions; and although there exists some inconsistency as to what constitutes a "leaver," there is general agreement as to who the "leaver" is. It is in the area of reasons why students leave school, and the reasons are many and multi-varied, that more research is needed-research that will provide knowledge and insight enabling school systems to inaugurate appropriate "preventive" programs. Research Literature over the years has had difficulty defining a "school dropout." For this reason, this report chose to identify "school leavers" vs "dropouts." As examples:

1. The Bureau of Attendance of the State of New York (1965) defined dropout as "a pupil over compulsory school-age who leaves school on his own volition before graduating from high school and without transferring to another school."

2. The U.S. Office of Education (1974) developed the following definition of a dropout: "a student who leaves a school, for any reason except death, ... who has been in membership during the regular school term, and who withdraws ... before graduating ... or completing an equivalent program of studies ... is considered a dropout whether ... dropping out occurs before or after (reaching) compulsory school attendance age."

3. In a 1977 report, the Philadelphia Public Schools defined dropouts as "pupils leaving ... high school before graduation without transferring to another school." (Note 1)

4. Finally, the Buffalo, New York Public Schools, in 1979, reporting on young people who leave high school before graduating, referred to them as "early school leavers;" and defined them as "... young people who are discharged from a public high school before graduation: (either) with a labor certificate, because they are over compulsory age, because they are not in school and not locatable, because they have been institutionalized, (or) for various specified or unspecified reasons." (Note 2)

This report, therefore, chose to identify so-called "dropouts" as "school leavers." The literature reveals that the population most likely to be potential school leavers includes those who have poor attendance or behavior patterns, have significant academic and achievement deficits, are members of an ethnic minority group as well as lower socioeconomic level, and whose parents do not have the wherewithal to provide their children with the necessary resources important for academic success.

B. Previous LAUSD Studies

In the past 15 years there have been four studies of "dropouts" and/or "school leavers" in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

1. The first study, undertaken in 1963, found from those dropouts who later returned to adult school and obtained a high school diploma that approximately two-thirds had left school because of personal and family problems. It was noted that a "considerable number found themselves unable to cope successfully with the school environment (and) believed that they would be happier (in) nonacademic pursuit." (Note 3)

2. In 1965, a second study found that LAUSD graduates and dropouts differed in many characteristics. (Note 4)

3. A third study, completed in 1970, found that: parents of graduates were white collar workers almost three times as frequently as were parents of dropouts; family income for dropouts was rated "very low" twice as often as that for graduates; the reverse was true for "very high" family income ratings; substantially higher proportions of the dropouts were of Hispanic and black identification than were the graduates; and males dropped out more often than females. (Note 5)

4. A fourth study, conducted in fall 1973, investigated certain characteristics of senior high school "absentees" and "school leavers". It discovered that a school leaver was one with poor reading ability (and not improving), high absenteeism, more economically deprived than peers, older than peers (retained), and losing interest in school (receiving poor marks). However, the school leaver's "could be just about any color, and ... is about as likely to be female as male." (Note 6)

II. DESCRIPTION

This major section of the current report contains descriptions and/or delineations of the purpose and procedures of the current study.

A. Purpose

It was the intent of this study to determine the extent to which LAUSD senior high school students left school during the 1979-80 school year. Specifically, the study was undertaken to answer such questions as: What was the incidence of students leaving school? Were there differences in the number, percentage, or rate of students leaving school with respect to type of school, sex, grade level, racial/ethnic identification, time of year, age, or administrative area of attendance? What were the reasons indicated for dropping out of school? Were there differences in these reasons with respect to type of school, sex, grade level, age, time of year, or administrative area of attendance? Answers to these questions might provide information to identify and appropriately counsel the potential school leaver.

B. Procedures

Schools in the Study. For each month of the 1979-80 school year, principals of 110 LAUSD secondary schools reported the number of 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students who "left" school during the month. These 110 schools, for purposes of this study, have been grouped into five "types" as follows: 49 regular senior high, 42 continuation, 7 opportunity, 7 special education, and 5 magnet/alternative schools. Certain results of this study are reported by these five "types of schools." Other results group schools by the 10 administrative areas of the District.

Data Gathering. Students who left school were reported on District Form 34-H-136, "Record of Transfer," and submitted monthly to the District's Research and Evaluation Branch. Each Form identified the school, the administrative area, and school month being reported.

Student information for this study taken from Form 34-H-136, included: sex, birthdate, grade level, numerically coded reason for leaving, and coded "type of leaver." This latter "type" was identified by an "L" code with a numeric indicator. Thus, a student's "L" identification was indicated by placing an "X" in an appropriate L1 to L8 column on the line containing his/her name.

Further, a column marked "Reason," coded 1 of 20 possible reasons why the student had left school.

Finally, space was provided at the bottom of Form 34-H-136 to distribute the total number of L8 school leavers each month by racial ethnic identification. (See Appendix for copy of Form.)

Subjects of the Study. It is the L8 "students" that are addressed in this report, and referred to as "school leavers." Thus, the subjects of this study consisted of 8,940 students with an L8 indicator defined as follows:

> L8 - dropped from school rolls for specific cause or reason (including medical exclusion when student will not be receiving instruction), or because whereabouts of student is unknown (after nonattendance for legally designated period of time).

Not included in this study were students formally graduated during or at the close of the tenth school month.

Data Processing. To increase the accuracy of the reported data, each student's entry on Form 36-H-136 was inspected for agreement between the "L" column checked and the coded (or verbal) reason for leaving school. By this inspection, many "judgmental" errors were corrected. For example, a student may have graduated and "inadvertently" been marked L8 rather than L7; or entered the Job Corps and was marked L4 rather than L8; or transferred to an LAUSD continuation or adult school and was marked L8 rather than L2.

Data on all L8 students were keypunched directly from Form 34-H-136 "Record of Transfer." Following the entry of data into the computer, preprogrammed error printouts were obtained. Errors of omission and commission as well as inconsistency of data were detected by comparison with original documents, and appropriate corrections entered into the computer.

Using predetermined computer programs, tabulated summary printouts of the data were produced, and are reflected in the tables presented in this report. The introductory material and remarks presented in previous sections of this report were obtained from selected research literature as well as previous published reports of LAUSD.

Data Analysis. Data presented in this study come from 110 schools in LAUSD containing 10th, 11th and 12th grades. Further, all L8 school leavers (except formal graduates) reported by the 110 schools during each school month of 1979-80 were included. There were a few schools for which one or two monthly reports were missing.

Statistical analyses based on sampling distributions were judged to be unnecessary. Where appropriate and meaningful, population means have been indicated. For comparison purposes, percentage rates of "leaver" occurrence were computed using October 1979 enrollment data as a base.

Concerning "reason for leaving school": of the 19 coded possibilities, reasons 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, and 13 were the only ones reported for over 90% of L8s leaving school. They include "fulltime employment" (2) "institutionalized pupil" (3), "marriage" (4) "medical exclusion" (5) , "military service" (6), "overage" (10), and "whereabouts unknown" (13). In addition, reasons for some L8s leaving school were coded 20 ("other"). The various written reasons indicated under code 20 were extracted from Form 34-H-136, and have been included in this report.

Finally, for both informational and comparative purposes, the results of this study are presented and reported with respect to the following variables: type of school, administrative area, month of school year, sex, grade level, mean age, racial/ethnic identity, and reason for leaving school.

III. RESULTS

Results are reported in this major section under the following three headings: (a) incidence of school leavers, an overall presentation of the frequency and rate senior high school students left school; (b) characteristics of the leaver, a presentation of leaver distributions with respect to certain variables; and (c) reasons for leaving school, a presentation of the coded reasons given, ranked according to certain variables.

A. Incidence of L8 School Leavers

During the 1979-80 school year, with the exception of those who formally graduated, 8,940 senior high school students in LAUSD were L8 "school leavers" (Table 1). The remainder of this subsection will present this incidence of school leavers with respect to (a) type of school, (b) administrative area, and (c) school month.

Table 1

Senior High School L8 Leavers and First School Month Enrollment, Distributed by Type of School, 1979-80

Senior High Schools		October 1979 Enrollment[a]		L8 School Leavers		
Type	Number	Number	%	Number	%	% of Enrollment
Regular	49	123,953	94.1	6,704	75.0	5.4
Magnet/ Alternative	5	2,063	1.6	10	0.1	0.5
Opportunity	7	626	0.5	127	1.4	20.3
Continuation	42	3,048	2.3	2,061	23.1	67.6
Special Educ.	7	1,948	1.5	38	0.4	2.0
Totals	110	131,638	100.0	8,940	100.0	6.8

[a]Enrollment data (from Racial and Ethnic Survey - Fall 1979, Research and Evaluation Publication No. 375) were drawn on October 5, 1979, the end of the first school month.

Leavers by Type of School. Shown also in Table 1 is the distribution of L8 school leavers by the five types of schools as defined in this report: 75% were from regular schools, and 23% from continuation schools. The total number of L8 leavers for schools combined equaled only 6.8% of the District's first school month enrollment of senior high students.

Leavers by Administrative Area. In Table 2, L8 leavers are shown within each administrative area. Areas 3, 6, and 8 each had over one thousand L8 Leavers during the 10 month school year.

Table 2

Senior High School L8 Leavers, Reported by Administrative Area, 1979-80

Administrative Area	Number of Senior High Schools	Number of L8 Leavers
1	13	939
2	11	938
3	9	1,278
4	13	555
5	12	960
6	9	1,157
7	7	650
8	10	1,043
9	13	759
10	13	661
Total	110	8,940

Leavers by School Month. In Table 3, L8 leavers are distributed by school month and type of school. The majority of 1979-80 L8 leavers departed during the second semester of the school year. In fact, the data reveal that almost two-thirds of all L8 leavers left during the second school semester, and the number of leavers generally increased each month. The highest percentage of L8 leavers across the District was found in the sixth school month.

Table 3

Senior High School L8 Leavers, Distributed by School Month and Type of School, 1979-80

School Month	Regular		Continuation		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	266	4.0%	50	2.4%	3	1.7%	319	3.6%
2	508	7.6	146	7.1	15	8.6	669	7.5
3	465	6.9	171	8.3	15	8.6	651	7.3
4	510	7.6	181	8.8	16	9.1	707	7.9
5	596	8.9	269	13.0	18	10.3	883	9.9
6	1,126	16.8	200	9.7	27	15.4	1,353	15.1
7	730	10.9	214	10.4	16	9.1	960	10.7
8	812	12.1	199	9.7	16	9.1	1,027	11.5
9	814	12.1	280	13.6	21	12.0	1,115	12.5
10	877	13.1	351	17.0	28	16.0	1,256	14.0
Totals	6,704	100.0	2,061	100.0	175	100.0	8,940	100.0

Note: "Other" includes magnet/alternative, opportunity, and special education schools.

B. Characteristics of L8 School Leavers

In this subsection, L8 school leavers are distributed with respect to sex, grade level, mean age, and ethnic identification, and reported by type of school and administrative area.

Sex of Leavers. Across the District in 1979-80, males comprised 60% and females 40% of the L8 Leavers (Table 4). Nearly the same distribution was found in all three senior high grades.

Table 4

Sex of Senior High School L8 Leavers, Distributed by Grade, 1979-80

Grade	Male		Female		Unidentified[a]		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
10	1,447	16.2	937	10.5	14	0.1	2,398	26.8
11	1,670	18.7	1,090	12.2	7	0.1	2,767	31.0
12	2,207	24.7	1,544	17.3	3	0.0	3,754	42.0
Unidentified[a]	16	0.2	5	0.0	-	-	21	0.2
Totals	5,340	59.7	3,576	40.0	24	0.3	8,940	100.0

[a]There were 24 leavers for whom sex was not reported but whose grade levels were. For 16 male and 5 female leavers, no grade levels were reported. These 45 instances were mutually exclusive.

Grade of Leavers. The distribution of senior high L8 leavers by grade is shown in Table 5, reported by "type" of school. In 1979-80, more L8s left from the 12th grade (42%) than either the 11th (31%) or 10th grade (27%). In regular schools, approximately 70% of the L8 leavers were divided almost equally between 11th and 12th grades. In magnet/alternative, continuation, and special education schools, approximately 60% of the leavers were in the 12th grade. However, in opportunity schools, almost 70% of the L8 leavers were 10th graders.

Table 5

Grade of Senior High School L8 Leavers,
by Type of School, 1979-80

Type of School	GRADE 10 No.	10 %	11 No.	11 %	12 No.	12 %	Unidentified[a] No.	Unidentified[a] %	TOTAL No.	TOTAL %
Regular	1,954	21.9	2,311	25.9	2,439	27.3	--	-	6,704	75.1
Magnet/ Alternative	0	0	4	0.0	6	0.1	--	-	10	0.1
Opportunity	88	1.0	29	0.3	10	0.1	--	-	127	1.4
Continuation	352	3.9	412	4.6	1,276	14.3	21	0.2	2,061	23.0
Special Educ.	4	0.0	11	0.1	23	0.3	--	-	38	0.4
Totals	2,398	26.8	2,767	30.9	3,754	42.1	21	0.2	8,940	100.0

[a]There were 21 L8 leavers for whom grade was not reported.

Mean Age of Leavers. As can be seen in Table 6, the mean age of L8 leavers in 1979-80 appeared to be approximately 17.5 years, and ranged from 15 to over 20 years. This was also the case for both male and female L8 leavers. The youngest L8 leavers appeared to be from opportunity schools.

Racial/Ethnic Identity of Leavers. Distributions of 1979-80 L8 leavers by racial/ethnic identification are reported by type of school and administrative area in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

Table 7 reveals that in regular schools, Hispanic students comprised 40% of all senior high school L8 leavers, with 26% white, 30% black, 3% Asian, and 0.5% American Indian/Alaskan Native. In continuation schools, almost half (46%) of the L8 leavers were white with 24% black and 28% Hispanic.

When compared to fall 1979 racial/ethnic distribution of all senior high school students, it can be seen that white and Asian L8 leavers in regular schools were under-represented, while black and Hispanic students were over-represented. In continuation schools, white L8 leavers were substantially over-represented, Asian L8 leavers were substantially under-represented, while black and Hispanic L8 leavers were representative of the fall racial/ethnic distribution.

Table 6

Mean Age of Senior High School L8 Leavers, by Type of School and Sex, 1979 - 80

GROUP	Mean Age (Yrs.)	L8 Leavers with Date of Birth[a] Reported	Not Reported	Total
School				
Regular	17.5	6,505	199	6,704
Magnet/Alternative	17.9	9	1	10
Opportunity	16.7	127	-	127
Continuation	17.6	2,031	30	2,061
Special Education	19.3	38	-	38
Total	17.5	8,711	230	8,940
Sex				
Male	17.6	5,194	146	5,340
Female	17.5	3,492	84	3,576
Unidentified[b]	17.7	24	-	24
Total	17.5	8,710	230	8,940

[a]The 230 students for whom date of birth were not reported represent 2.6% of the cases.
[b]There were 24 L8 leavers for whom sex was not reported.

Table 7

Comparison of L8 Leavers and First School Month Enrollment in Senior High Schools, by Ethnicity and Type of School, 1979-80

Type of School	RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION										Total No. of Leavers
	Am. Ind.		Asian		Black		Hispanic		White		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Regular	31	0.5	199	3.0	2,035	30.3	2,665	39.7	1,774	26.5	6,704
Continuation	8	0.4	37	1.8	484	23.5	586	28.4	946	45.9	2,061
Other[a]	1	0.6	2	1.1	57	32.6	54	30.9	61	34.8	175
District:											
L8 Leavers	40	0.4	238	2.7	2,576	28.8	3,305	37.0	2,781	31.1	8,940
Fall 1979 Racial/Ethnic Distribution[b]		0.5		7.9		25.5		28.8		37.3	

[a]"Other" combines magnet/alternative, opportunity, and special education schools.
[b]From Racial and Ethnic Survey - Fall 1979, Publication No. 375, Research and Evaluation Branch.

Examination of Table 8 shows that in the District as a whole, Hispanic L8 leavers, although comprising 37% of all L8 leavers, represented only 29% of the senior high school population. Blacks showed a similar disparity (29%, 26%), but as can be seen, the difference was much less. Representation of whites (31%) and Asians (3%) in the total senior high L8 leaver population was well below respective senior high school population proportions (37%, 8%). For American Indians, the disparity was practically nil (0.4%, 0.5%).

Further study of Table 8 reveals that in some administrative areas, disparities were much larger than in the District as a whole. For example, in Area 2 the proportion of black L8 leavers was more than 17 percentage points greater than their proportion of the total District senior high school population (49%, 32%). In the same area, the reverse was true for Hispanics (37%, 53%). On the other hand, in Area 1, both black (16%) and Asian (6%) L8 leaver proportions were well below that of their respective school populations (27%, 14%); in the same area, the reverse was true for both Hispanics (36%, 26%) and whites (41%, 32%).

Table 8

Comparison of L8 Leavers and First School Month Enrollment in Senior High Schools, by Ethnicity and Administrative Area, 1979-80

Area	RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION										Total No. of Leavers
	Am. Ind.		Asian		Black		Hispanic		White		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	4	0.4	57	6.1	147	15.7	343	36.5	388	41.3	939
2	6	0.6	4	0.4	463	49.4	349	37.2	116	12.4	938
3	0	-0-	3	0.2	1,116	87.3	120	9.4	39	3.1	1,278
4	2	0.4	15	2.7	241	43.4	104	18.7	193	34.8	555
5	13	1.4	61	6.4	313	32.6	396	41.2	177	18.4	960
6	8	0.7	20	1.7	83	7.2	969	83.7	77	6.7	1,157
7	3	0.5	41	6.3	11	1.7	352	54.1	243	37.4	650
8	2	0.2	16	1.5	127	12.2	439	42.1	459	44.0	1,043
9	1	0.1	9	1.2	54	7.1	148	19.5	527	72.1	759
10	1	0.1	12	1.8	21	3.2	85	12.9	542	82.0	661
District: L8 Leavers	40	0.4	238	2.7	2,576	28.8	3,305	37.0	2,781	31.1	8,940
Fall 1979 Racial/Ethnic Distribution		0.5		7.9		25.5		28.8		37.3	

From Racial and Ethnic Survey - Fall 1979, Publication No. 375, Research and Evaluation Branch.

C. Reasons L8 School Leavers Left School

On Form 34-14-136, used by schools to report school leavers, 19 coded reasons were listed for indicating why a student left school. If none of the 19 reasons seemed to apply, schools were to use code 20 "other," and explain the reason. Of the 19 codes, only 7 were used with L8 leavers. In addition, certain of the code 20 reasons were identified with L8 leavers (See Form in Appendix).

In this section, the seven coded reasons given for L8 students leaving school are addressed, showing the rank order of these reasons districtwide with respect to sex, grade, and mean age. The eighth reason, "other," is included in each presentation as an unranked reason, but subsequently is presented as a separate distribution showing the rank order of all "other" responses indicated.

Reasons by Sex. In Table 9 are shown, in rank order, the reasons why 8,940 L8 senior high school students left school during 1979-80. "Over legal age" was given for 41% of the students, while another 33% were administratively dropped from school attendance rolls because their "whereabouts were unknown." These two reasons accounted for almost three-quarters of all L8 leavers.

"Fulltime employment," and "being institutionalized (or incarcerated)" constituted the next two major reasons, together accounting for another 12% of the L8 leavers.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh ranked reasons ("enlistment in the military," "medical exclusion," and "marriage," respectively), together accounted for another 5% while the remaining 9% left for "other" reasons.

Both male and female L8 leavers had "overage" listed as the principal reason for leaving high school.

Reasons by Grade. As indicated in Table 10, the ranked order of reasons why L8 eleventh graders left school in 1979-80, as well as the percentage of leavers for each reason, was approximately the same as for all L8 leavers.

L8 12th graders' reasons have practically the same rank as for all L8 leavers. However, the percentage of L8 leavers per reason varies dramatically. Over 60% of 12th graders left because they were "overage" (compared to 41% for all leavers); and only 20% left because their "whereabouts were unknown" (compared to 33% for all L8 leavers).

The ranking of reasons for 10th grade L8 leavers differs dramatically from that of all L8 leavers. The most prevalent reason (54%) is "whereabouts unknown." "Overage" accounted for only 12%. Larger percentages of 10th grade L8 leavers were "institutionalized" or "employed full time" than were either 11th or 12th grade L8 leavers. "Military enlistment" ranked last as a 10th grade L8 leaver reason.

Table 9

Reasons L8 Senior High School Students Left School, By Sex of Student, 1979-80

Reason for Leaving	L8 LEAVERS							
	Males		Females		Unidentified[a]		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Overage	2,246	61.7	1,382	38.0	11	0.3	3,639	40.7
Whereabouts Unknown	1,631	54.6	1,342	45.0	13	0.4	2,986	33.4
Full Time Employment	380	63.4	219	36.6	-	--	599	6.7
Institutionalized	395	85.1	69	14.9	-	--	464	5.2
Enlisted Military	212	93.0	16	7.0	-	--	228	2.5
Medical Exclusion	39	26.4	109	73.6	-	--	148	1.7
Marriage	3	3.5	83	96.5	-	--	86	1.0
Otherb	434	54.9	356	45.1	-	--	790	8.8
All L8 Leavers	5,340		3,576		24		8,940	100.0

[a]There were 24 leavers for whom sex was not reported.
[b]See Table 12 for distribution of "Other" reasons.

TABLE 10

Reasons L8 Senior High School Students Left School, Ranked and Reported by Grade, 1979 - 80

Reason for Leaving	GRADE OF L8 LEAVERS									
	10		11		12		Unidentified[a]		Total	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Overage	2	12.0	1	37.7	1	61.4	2	9.5	1	40.7
Whereabouts Unknown	1	54.5	2	33.8	2	19.5	1	66.5	2	33.4
Full Time Employment	4	8.3	3	7.3	3	5.3	3	4.8	3	6.7
Institutionalized	3	9.5	4	5.3	5	2.4	-	-	4	5.2
Enlisted Military	7	1.2	5	3.6	4	2.6	-	-	5	2.5
Medical Exclusion	5	2.1	6	1.7	6	1.3	4	4.7	6	1.7
Marriage	6	1.3	7	1.3	7	0.5	-	-	7	1.0
Other[b]	U	11.1	U	9.3	U	7.0	U	14.3	U	8.8
Total	2,398		2,767		3,754		21		8,940	

[a] See footnote to Table 4.
[b] U = Unranked (see Table 12 for distribution of "Other")

Reasons by Mean Age. Ranking L8 leaver reasons by age was found to be too cumbersome and would have produced results highly correlated to the results by grade level. However, Table 11 showns mean ages of L8 leavers for each of the eight L8 leaver reasons.

Compared to the average age for all L8 leavers (17.5 years), it appears that "whereabouts unknown" and "institutionalized" L8 leavers were substantially below this age (16.9, 16.6 years). This agrees with previously cited results which showed that larger proportions of L8 tenth graders left school because of these two reasons.

The relatively high mean age of all L8 leavers is accounted for by the large number of "overage" L8 leavers, many of whom (approximately 20%) were 19 and 20 years of age.

TABLE 11

Reasons L8 Senior High School Students Left School, Showing Mean Age and Number of Students Identified with Each Reason, 1979 - 80

Reason for Leaving	Mean Age (Yrs.)	Number of L8 Leavers		Total
		Reported Date of Birth	Unreported Date of Birth	
Overage	18.4	3,583	56	3,639
Whereabouts Unknown	16.9	2,870	116	2,986
Full Time Employment	17.2	582	17	599
Institutionalized	16.6	455	9	464
Enlisted Military	17.3	222	6	228
Medical Exclusion	17.1	144	4	148
Marriage	17.0	86	0	86
Other[a]	17.0	768	22	790
Total	17.5	8,710	230	8,940

[a]See Table 12 for distribution of "Other" reasons

"Other" Reasons. Listed in Table 12, in rank order, are the "other" reasons given for the 790 L8 leavers for whom code 20 was reported. The most frequent "other" reason given (32%) was "nonattendance/excessive absence." Accounting for another 26% was "dropped to parent/custody of parent." About 17% of the L8 students dropped from school rolls had "expired." Thus, these three reasons combined accounted for 75% of all "other" reasons. The remaining 25% include such reasons as "parent request", "expelled," "child care," "emancipated minor," "undercover agent," and no written statements.

TABLE 12

Written Statements Accompanying Coded Reason 20 (Other) for 790 Senior High School L8 Leavers, 1979-80

Statement (in Rank Order)	Frequency of Occurrence	
	Number	Percentage
1. "Non Attendance" or "Excessive Absence"	251	31.8%
2. "Custody of Parent" or "Home" or "Dropped to Parent"	205	25.9
3. "Deceased"	131	16.5
4. "Parent Request" or "Mother's Helper"	55	7.0
5. "Expelled"	47	5.9
6. "Child Care"	40	5.1
7. No Statement	35	4.4
8. "Emancipated Minor"	21	2.7
9. "Undercover Agent"	5	0.6
Total	790	100.0

IV. DISCUSSION, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following a short discussion, this section presents a summary of the findings of this study, followed by recommendations based on these findings.

A. Discussion

It was not the intent of the study to undertake a definitive analysis of early school leavers. Because of time constraints and difficulties in following up students (due to their high rate of mobility), it was possible only to analyze the data provided monthly by the schools.

These data should be viewed cautiously, and attempts to draw broad generalizations from them avoided. Further, comparison with data of previous LAUSD studies is not possible due to the time lapse since the last study (1974), the variance in the nature of the data, and the definitions or identity of subjects.

The large number of "whereabouts unknown" leavers raises additional need for concern. However, if all these "whereabouts unknown" students were truly leavers, their reasons for leaving would certainly have added additional information and enrichment to the study. To the extent that this information is unavailable, a dimension of the study is lost.

B. Findings

The following is a summary of 1979-80 L8 school leaver findings based on the results of this study.

1. The total number of L8 leavers from regular senior high schools in 1979-80 equaled approximately 5% of the senior high school population as reported in the fall 1979 Racial and Ethnic Survey publication.

2. Senior high school students tended to leave school more frequently during the second semester of the school year, with the largest number of L8 leavers occurring during the sixth and tenth school months.

3. More males left school then did females. The typical senior high school L8 leaver was a 12th grade male, approximately 17.5 years of age, and Hispanic.

4. The proportions of senior high school L8 leavers who were black or Hispanic tended to be greater than their respective proportions in the total senior high school student population.

5. The most frequent reason given for L8 11th or 12th graders leaving school was "overage."

6. The most frequent reason given for L8 10th graders leaving school (i.e., dropped from attendance rolls) was "whereabouts unknown."

7. Being "institutionalized or incarcerated" was more frequently given as a reason for L8 10th graders than for either L8 11th or 12th graders.

C. Recommendations

A greater understanding of early school leavers, and insight into the reasons why students leave school before graduating, are critical needs

in public schools today. To this end the following recommendations are offered:

1. Continue to maintain accurate records on school leavers.

2. Continue to study school leavers on a regular basis.

3. Undertake follow-up studies of school leavers and attempt to identify the potential leaver.

4. Based on current findings, provide students and parents, in those schools and administrative areas with the highest rates of early school leavers, with appropriate activities-such as counseling, career oriented programs and others-that emphasize the need and importance of remaining in school.

REFERENCE NOTES

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6. Los Angeles Unified School District. Study of Senior High School Absentees and School Leavers. Research and Evaluation Branch Report Number 343, September 1974.

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APPENDIX

P.O. 0128-[illegible]

FORM 56-H-136 REV. 3/88
STOCK NO. 651371

L1 Within district—same school
L2 Within district—not same school (See Lx for Integration Reassignment)
L3 Public school within State
L4 Nonpublic school in California
L5 Other states in USA and out of USA
L7 9th and 12th Grade graduates and students withdrawing with Certificate of Proficiency
L8 Unknown and Drop (include medical exemptions when student will not be receiving any instruction)
Lx Participating school in paired/clustered/midpoint reassignment

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT School _____ Loc. Code _____ Area _____

RECORD OF TRANSFER Month ending _____ Page _____ Telephone No. _____

	DATE LEFT	DAYS NOT ENROLLED	NAME	RECORD NO.	TRANSFERRED TO SCHOOL	CITY	STATE	BIRTH DATE Mo · Day · Year	*REASON	GRADE 7/10	GRADE 8/11	GRADE 9/12	HOMEROOM	AAR PROGRAM	PTR	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L7	**L8	Lx	
1																								1
2																								2
3																								3
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19																								19
20																								20

*Reason for Transfer

1. Family Moving
2. Full-time Employment
3. Institutionalized Pupil
4. Marriage
5. Medical Exclusion
6. Military Service
7. Non-Public School
8. Opportunity Transf.
9. Oppor. Transf. Cancelled
10. Over-age
11. Permit Cancelled
12. Statement of Residence
13. Whereabouts Unknown
14. Regular
15. Curriculum
16. Sibling
17. Medical
18. Failed Competency Test
19. PWT
20. Other _____ Identify

**Ethnicity of L8 students who are listed

Number of:

American Indian ☐ Asian ☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ White ☐

Person to Contact Concerning This Report

Signature of Principal or Authorized Substitute

RETURN TO RESEARCH AND EVALUATION, ADMINISTRATION OFFICES, ROOM G-265